

Political Thoughts of Subhash Chandra Bose: A Study

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Abstract

Subhash Chandra Bose is among those unique leaders of the Indian freedom struggle who gave a new direction to Indian politics with his revolutionary ideology, organizational ability and patriotism. His political thought is a wonderful synthesis of realism, nationalism, socialism and strong nationalism. This research article presents a detailed analysis of the life, struggle and political ideas of Subhash Chandra Bose. It reviews his political realism, concept of complete independence, ideological differences with Mahatma Gandhi, principles of Forward Bloc, his views on economic and social justice, formation of Azad Hind Fauj and the allegations of him being a fascist. The study concludes that Subhash Chandra Bose was an extremist nationalist, realist thinker and leader influenced by socialist ideology, who adopted every possible path for the independence of India.

Keywords: Subhash Chandra Bose, Political Realism, Complete Independence (Purna Swaraj), Forward Bloc, Azad Hind Fauj, Leftist Ideology, Social Justice, Gandhi-Bose Relations, Netaji, Indian Nationalism.

Subhash Chandra Bose was born in 1897 in a prestigious family in Kolkata. He passed the ICS (Indian Civil Service) examination in 1921, but inspired by his dedication to the country's freedom, he resigned from this prestigious post at the young age of 24 and entered active politics.

Subhash Chandra Bose was disappointed with the pace and programs of the freedom struggle being led by Mahatma Gandhi. He was in search of a more assertive and revolutionary path. In this direction, he received guidance from the patriotic leader Chittaranjan Das. The then British government made efforts to win him over to their side, but Subhash Chandra Bose did not abandon the path of the freedom struggle.

Alarmed by the growing activities of Subhash Chandra Bose, the British government considered him dangerous. In 1925, he was detained and sent to Mandalay Jail in Myanmar (then Burma). He was arrested about 10 times and spent nearly 8 years of his life in prison cells. This reflects his rebellious and indomitable nature.

Even though he did not have complete faith in Gandhiji's Non-Cooperation Movement, he cooperated in it and went to jail. When Gandhiji withdrew the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1939, Subhash Babu was deeply disappointed and clearly stated that "Gandhiji has failed politically."

Due to poor health in jail, the government allowed him to go to Europe for treatment. During his stay in Europe, he studied various political ideologies in depth and became familiar with the real conditions of India. On his return to India in 1938, he was declared the President of the Haripura Congress. His ideological conflicts with the senior leaders of the Congress increased. In 1939, despite Gandhiji's opposition, he defeated Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya and regained the post of Congress President. But the ideological differences became so acute that he had to leave the Congress and formed a new party called the 'Forward Bloc'.

The government, concerned by his growing influence, detained him again. On this, Subhash Chandra Bose wrote an historic warning letter to the government, in which he said:

"Set me free, otherwise I will refuse to live. It is within my power to decide whether I live or die. The blood of martyrs is the seed of freedom. I must die now so that India can become independent and glorious. I want to tell my countrymen not to forget that slavery is the greatest sin for mankind."

Under the pressure of this letter and the widespread public movement, the government released him from prison. As soon as he was freed from imprisonment, he again started organizing a mass movement. At the time of the outbreak of the Second World War, he called upon the people and talked about establishing a provisional national government. Frightened by this, the government detained him in his own house. But Subhash Chandra Bose gave the police the slip, miraculously escaped from there, and reached Germany via Kabul and then Japan.

Japan was at that time defeating the Allied forces. Subhash Chandra Bose formed the 'Azad Hind Fauj' (Indian National Army) with Japan's help to free India from slavery. He infused patriotism among the public and soldiers through the slogans 'Jai Hind', 'Dilli Chalo' and 'Lal Qila Hamara Hai'. Under the leadership of Netaji, the Azad Hind Fauj attacked India's north-eastern border in February 1944 and, despite the lack of heavy artillery and resources, liberated some parts of Assam from the British. However, the war conditions became unfavorable while advancing beyond Imphal. With Japan's defeat in 1945, all the occupied territories of the Azad Hind Fauj came under British control again. Netaji had to flee to Tokyo, but he reportedly died in an airplane accident on August 18, 1945, en route to Taiwan (then Formosa).

Political Thoughts of Subhash Chandra Bose:

Subhash Chandra Bose had deep faith in political realism. Unlike Mahatma Gandhi, he did not like to mix spiritual or religious elements in politics. He held the clear view that it is not appropriate to entangle questions of politics and morality or to view political matters from a religious perspective. He accepted politics in its true form - a field where practicality and understanding of reality are extremely essential.

Netaji believed that the secret of successful political deals lies in appearing much more powerful than you actually are. This demonstrates his diplomatic understanding and realistic approach. He never liked humility or a language of begging. He was in favor of demanding his rights from the British rule in a loud voice, not by bowing his head.

This was the reason why Subhash Chandra Bose did not accept the humble vocabulary and gentle approach adopted by Mahatma Gandhi at the Second Round Table Conference in 1931. He openly opposed this approach because, in his view, not humility but firmness and authoritative demand could yield meaningful results before an imperialist power.

For the attainment of his rights, Subhash Chandra Bose believed in armed struggle. He believed that decisive victory against the British Empire could be achieved not only through negotiations and passive resistance, but through the demonstration of military power. In the last years of his life, he attempted to realize this idea by forming the 'Azad Hind Fauj' and launching a military campaign in India. It was a result of his political realism that he planned to attack India with the help of international powers, sensing the circumstances of the Second World War.

As a true political realist, Subhash Chandra Bose had realized that nation-building is not done just by speeches and resolutions, but by strict sacrifice and austerity. He held the clear view that if the countrymen want political freedom, they must be prepared to face immense hardships and troubles for it. He considered sacrifice an essential part of the freedom struggle.

In Netaji's view, attaining freedom requires great moral preparation. He said that without moral strength, the capacity to endure suffering and make sacrifices cannot develop. Thus, in his political thought, moral values were as important as realism. He wanted the countrymen to become so morally strong that they become ready to make every kind of sacrifice for freedom. Subhash Chandra Bose mostly did not agree with the political ideas and methodology of Mahatma Gandhi. He never liked Gandhiji's policy of compromise, i.e., humble negotiation and compromise before the imperialist power. He believed that in the struggle against British rule, instead of gentleness and tolerance, firmness and an aggressive stance needed to be adopted.

Like Gandhiji, he did not consider it appropriate to mix morality and spirituality in politics. Netaji clearly believed that politics has its own realistic form, which should not be bound by religion and morality. He rejected any form of religious politics and was in favor of viewing political issues from a practical perspective.

Despite ideological differences, Subhash Chandra Bose had deep personal respect for Mahatma Gandhi in his heart. He was a true admirer of the wonderful strength of Gandhiji's character, his life of sacrifice, and his extraordinary willpower. He was the first to address Gandhiji as 'Rashtrapita' (Father of the Nation), which symbolizes his deep reverence and respect for him.

Netaji was greatly impressed by Gandhiji's hard work, patriotism, and spirit of sacrifice. He knew very well that the flame of national consciousness that Gandhiji had ignited in the Indian masses was unique.

Despite personal respect, Subhash Chandra Bose was a bitter critic of Gandhiji's principle of Trusteeship and the policy of class coordination. He believed that expecting trusteeship from capitalists or trying to coordinate the interests of different classes is not realistic. According to him, political and economic struggles require a clear stance, not continuous compromise.

Although Subhash Chandra Bose was a critic of Gandhiji's methods and policies, he deeply felt his indispensability in the country's struggle for freedom. This is why, in his presidential address at the Haripura Congress session (1938), he expressed this important view.

He said that "India does not want to lose Gandhi, and especially at this time we need him so that our struggle remains free from wrong direction." He also admitted that "We feel his need for freedom. What more can we say, we need him for the protection of humanity."

Subhash Chandra Bose had unwavering faith in complete independence (Purna Swaraj). He held the clear view that India should not be satisfied with merely obtaining autonomy or Dominion Status under the British Empire. He wanted India to be completely independent, where it would have its own sovereign constitution and be the architect of its own destiny. This was the reason he rejected the Nehru Report (1928), because that report proposed giving India Dominion Status, not complete independence.

At the insistence of Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose signed the Congress resolution in 1929, but with an important condition. He agreed that if the British did not accept India's demands, then the Congress would declare complete independence (Purna Swaraj) as its goal in its next session. This condition demonstrates his unwavering commitment to complete independence.

Subhash Chandra Bose's wish was fulfilled at the Lahore session of the Congress in 1930. In this historic session, complete independence was declared the goal of the Congress. As a result, the second Civil Disobedience Movement was launched to achieve Purna Swaraj. During this movement, Subhash Chandra Bose, along with many other leaders, was arrested and sent to jail.

When Mahatma Gandhi suspended the Civil Disobedience Movement by signing the Gandhi-Irwin Pact (1931), Subhash Chandra Bose was deeply saddened and disappointed. In his view, this pact amounted to compromising the goal of complete independence. He believed that such compromises slow down the pace of the freedom struggle and dampen the public's enthusiasm.

Troubled by this policy of the Congress, Subhash Chandra Bose concluded that complete independence from the British Empire could not be achieved only through political negotiations and non-cooperation movements. This was the reason he decided to go outside India and build a military organization. He firmly believed that India could be granted complete independence only through armed force.

Subhash Chandra Bose believed that the power of the Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi would gradually decline and the influence of leftist parties in India would continuously increase. Keeping

this political change in mind, he prepared a comprehensive program for a new political party, which presents a detailed description of his political ideology. This program is compiled in his famous book 'The Indian Struggle', which includes the following major points:

1. This party will work for the complete political and economic liberation of the Indian people. The main base of the party will be that section of the society which earns its livelihood through its own labor - i.e., farmers, workers and other working classes. The party will clearly oppose the interests of capitalists, landlords, moneylenders and other exploiting classes and will not support their interests.
2. The party will have full faith in an adequate system of state planning for the reorganization of agricultural and industrial life. He believed that without a well-planned economic policy, the comprehensive development of the country is not possible.
3. The ultimate goal of the party will be to establish a federal system of government, but for a few years after the attainment of independence, the party will believe in a strong central government endowed with authoritarian powers. Its objective was to ensure that India could stand firmly on its feet while facing internal and external challenges.
4. The party will attempt to establish a new currency system keeping in mind the prevalent principles and experiments in the modern world. This system will be tailored to the needs of India.
5. The party will attempt to build a new social order on the ideals of those ancient village communities, where village panchayats used to govern. In addition, the party will attempt to abolish existing social evils like the caste system.
6. The party will not support the kind of democracy that was prevalent in England during the mid-British rule. Instead, the party will believe in a powerful organization that operates through military discipline. He believed that after India becomes independent, it will have to depend entirely on its own resources, and in such circumstances, this disciplined organization would be the only means to maintain the unity of the country and prevent political anarchy.
7. The party will abolish the Zamindari system and will attempt to implement a uniform land system across India, so that farmers can get fair fruits of their labor.
8. The party will attempt to organize all those militant organizations under a national executive. This will ensure that whenever any action is taken, it can be carried out simultaneously and in a coordinated manner on multiple fronts.
9. To strengthen Indian freedom, the party will not confine its movement to the geographical boundaries of India, but will take recourse to propaganda at the international level. For this, the party will attempt to use existing international organizations to garner global support for the question of India's independence.

Subhash Chandra Bose believed that along with political freedom, it is also essential to struggle for social freedom. He believed that the internal social conflict between farmers and landlords, between workers and capitalists, and between rich and poor cannot be postponed. He held the view that just as they would achieve political freedom for India, they would also secure economic and social freedom for the people of the country. He believed that the power of leftists would increase in India and in the fourth decade of the twentieth century, he himself was the prominent leader of the emerging leftist forces. He always raised his voice for the fulfillment of the aspirations of the farmers and the working class.

In 1939, Subhash Chandra Bose resigned from the presidency of the Congress and established a new political party called the 'Forward Bloc'. The objective of this party was to work towards achieving Indian freedom as soon as possible. He did not believe in the policy of consolation or compromise. This is why in January 1941, the following principles of the Forward Bloc were declared:

1. Complete national independence and an anti-imperialist struggle to achieve it.
2. A modern socialist state.
3. Social control and ownership of the means of production and distribution.
4. Organization of production in a scientific manner for the economic revival of the country.
5. Religious freedom.
6. Linguistic and cultural freedom for every section of society.
7. Equal rights for all individuals.
8. Implementing the principles of freedom along with social justice in the building of independent India.

Through the Forward Bloc, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose inspired the youth of India to adopt a revolutionary path and give the freedom struggle a more active and conflict-oriented direction. In June 1940, he met Veer Savarkar. During this meeting, Subhash Chandra Bose told that he wanted to start a movement in Kolkata to remove the statues of British officers.

Veer Savarkar advised him not to waste his energy and time in such small movements. He suggested that making efforts at the international level would be more effective for India's freedom. Savarkar advised Bose to go outside India, organize Indian prisoners of war with the help of foreign powers, and work on a plan to launch a military campaign from the direction of Burma or the Bay of Bengal.

Subhash Chandra Bose took this advice seriously. He outwitted the British government, left India, and reached Germany via Kabul. There he tried to get help from the ruler of Germany, Adolf Hitler, for India's independence. He organized Indian prisoners of war captured by Germany and Italy to form a military unit, later called the "Indian Legion". Its headquarters was established in the city of Dresden in Germany.

During the Second World War, in December 1941, Japan started war against Britain. Subsequently, in 1942, the formation of the Azad Hind Fauj (INA) was announced in Tokyo, in which more than 50,000 Indian soldiers joined. In June 1943, Subhash Chandra Bose, addressing Indians from Tokyo Radio, said that hoping to get freedom from the British willingly is futile because no empire ends itself willingly. He called upon Indians living in India and abroad to launch an organized struggle for freedom.

On October 21, 1943, Subhash Chandra Bose, as the Supreme Commander of the Azad Hind Fauj, established the Provisional Government of Free India (Azad Hind Government). This government was recognized by several countries including Germany, Japan, Italy, Philippines, Korea, China (Manchuria) and Ireland. Japan handed over the administration of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to this provisional government. Netaji renamed Andaman Island as 'Shaheed Island' and Nicobar as 'Swaraj Island'. On December 30, 1943, the tricolor flag of independent India was hoisted there.

In 1944, the Azad Hind Fauj launched a military campaign towards northeastern India and fought against the British army in the Imphal and Kohima regions. On September 22, 1944, Netaji, while celebrating "Shaheedi Diwas", gave his famous slogan to his soldiers—
"You give me blood, I will give you freedom."

However, circumstances changed at the end of the Second World War. After Germany's defeat, in August 1945, America dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, as a result of which Japan surrendered. The areas under Japanese control came under the Allied powers again. In these circumstances, Subhash Chandra Bose had to leave for Tokyo, but during this time, news of his death in an airplane crash was received.

Looking at the ideas and actions of Subhash Chandra Bose, he is often called a fascist. According to Dr. Vishwanath Prasad Varma, the answer to this question can be both yes and no. Subhash Chandra Bose was essentially an extremist nationalist leader. He certainly had an emotional inclination towards the methods of fascist dictators, and he also believed in armed struggle for the country's independence. This is the reason why during the Second World War, he formed the Azad Hind Fauj for the country's independence and led armed struggles for freedom in many countries of the world.

Fascism has no monopoly over violence. Bose's violent struggle is considered fascist because he took armed assistance from fascist powers in Europe and Asia and adopted the title 'Netaji', which is the Hindi synonym of 'Führer'.

But Bose did not have faith in the fundamental principles of fascism. He did not support imperialist expansion, nor did he ever believe in the principle of racial superiority. He did not believe in many of the fundamental principles of fascist philosophy. He was just looking for friends for India and did not hesitate to take armed assistance from anti-British powers.

Thus, although he took help from fascist states for the country's freedom, he was neither a fascist nor did he believe in fascist ideology. He was merely a pragmatic nationalist who considered it appropriate to take help from every possible source for India's independence.

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